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HOW THE VALIANT
GOT ITS NAME

What's in a name?

If it's an automobile name, plenty!

And if you really want to know, ask the car-owning public, says Chrysler Corporation, at the time its new economy car, Valiant was introduced in the Fall of 1959.

In an effort to select an appropriate name for the then new idea in transportation, the company went to the public with an exhaustive, grass roots survey before corporation officials selected the suitable name, Valiant.

The study penetrated every geographical area of the nation, urban, suburban and rural. It reached all age groups, both sexes (family evenly split) all income brackets. All persons interviewed in the canvass were automobile owners.

In the final survey itself, the five best car names were selected. These names were carefully picked from an extensive list of several thousand suggestions. For over three years before the name selection was made, Valiant was called simply the A-901 project.

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Prior to the survey, name suggestions poured in from all diverse sources of the corporation as engineers, copy writers, researchers, sales personnel, lawyers, stylists, dealers, secretaries, factory workers, contributed ideas.

All known methods of selecting names were used. In one phase of the search, officials even "brain-picked" an IBM Machine for every possible combination of five or six letters in an effort to get a brand new name.

From the list of well over 2,000 names, all but 100 were eliminated by various processes. More research reduced the list to 20 which, for the most part, were sound, uncontrived, and acceptable.

At this point, Chrysler Corporation's legal department took over, searching to determine which of the 20 were unencumbered by registered claim, or previous usage. Finally, five names were ready for one of the most intensive studies ever conducted. The five that had survived were Revere, Chelsea, Columbia, Liberty and Valiant.

In trying to probe the consumer mind, interviewing teams, equipped with a four-page exhaustive questionnaire, constantly sought answers to such questions as: Which of the five "seems" like a car name? What does each name "say?" What price class does each name suggest? And which of the five would cause you to say, "I'd rather be known as the owner of a _____?"

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Authorities on the subject concur that all product names (all words, in fact) conjure mental images in the minds of people. One that might transmit an "automotive image," for instance, would be completely undesirable for a flower, or cake mix.

Although Chrysler Corporation officials felt they would not over-emphasize the importance of selecting a new product name, neither did they feel that a good name was any automatic, sure-fire guarantee of the product's success.

On the subject of automobile naming, one executive said: "No name, by itself, can sell a product, especially an automobile. But a desirable name can be a vital contributing factor to its ultimate success. A wrong name can keep customers away; a name can work against you, as well as for you."

Company officials also insisted that the new name connote only positive automotive qualities: such as American-made family car, amply proportioned, smartly designed, safe and stable under all conditions; that the name also show the brand new car is comfortable, and suitable for modern super highways.

The survey conclusively indicated that Valiant did suggest these positive qualities; it was an overwhelming choice among those surveyed.

The scope of the survey was as interesting as its results, and equally significant. In an effort to reach every conceivable group, which would insure answers from a well defined cross section, interviewers

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literally ran the gamut of all possible frames of mind. Broken down into four general classifications they could be said to include: 1) the "Innovators," a group which traditionally enjoys being the first to try new things, 2) potential buyers, those who say "they definitely intend to buy a new car this year," 3) the casual ones who, more or less, are interestedly "on the fence," and 4) the apathetic.

In the collective thoughts of the above four groups, the name, Valiant, suggested the following automotive qualities: a powerful American-built car, advanced styling, well built and a luxury car.

In summing up results of the 1959 survey, a Valiant official said:

"The final value of a name was determined by what customers see in ... and do about... the actual product. We selected a name which does not suggest other products, one which belongs on our all-new car, with all its desirable qualities. The name, Valiant, also conveys the idea of being a part of the prestige price class. Also, that it is a name people will like to say, like the sound of, and which contributes to their pride of ownership."

"In this study, Valiant was overwhelmingly chosen in all measurements as satisfying these requirements. In fact, the people themselves, in the final analysis, chose our -- or their -- name, Valiant."